

# **Prairie Wetlands Learning Center**

## **Residential Trip Planner**

**2002-2003**



---

# Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Mission Statements	2
Facilities	3
Food Service	4
Emergency Information	5
Student Mail	6
Fees & Fundraising	7
Scheduling a Trip	8
Changes/Cancellations	8
Arrival/Departure	9
Additional Services & Charges	9
Environmental Education Program Content	10-12
Prairie Pothole Projects	13
Evening Programs	14
Programs with PWLC Partners	15
Sample Schedules	16-17
Group Management	18
Planning Checklist	19
What to Bring Checklist	20
Student Letter	23
Parent Letter	24-25
PWLC Video Library	31-33
<b>Forms</b>	
• Reservation & Billing Form	21
• Program & Schedule Form	22
• Room Assignment Worksheet	26-27
• Scholarship Application	28-29
• Photo Release	30

---

# **Introduction to the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center**

## **History**

The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center (PWLC) has its roots in the 1970's when a group of local conservationists envisioned a conservation education center in Fergus Falls. In 1989, the Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center was formed to lead the efforts to make this vision a reality. The Townsend Waterfowl Production Area, owned by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), was selected as the site for the future learning center because of its proximity to Interstate 94 and the City of Fergus Falls.

The Service has acquired additional acreage over the years at the Townsend site with Federal Duck Stamp Funds bringing the total property to its current 325 acres. In 1993, environmental education programs began in the remodeled barn located on the property, and the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center became a reality. A cooperative agreement was forged with the State of Minnesota, the City of Fergus Falls, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the tireless efforts of the Friends of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center to build a visitor center and dormitory on the site. The facility opened in August of 1998.

## **The Land**

The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center (PWLC) includes 325 acres of native and restored prairie with 28 distinct wetlands. An oak savanna graces a portion of the site, and nearly four miles of trails (some wheelchair accessible) allow visitors to explore and discover the life of the prairies and wetlands.

The land is actively managed for both wildlife and people. Scheduled prescribed prairie burns promote diverse plant and animal populations, and water control structures allow the staff to control water levels in the wetlands. The trail system is maintained to ensure safe and pleasant access for all.

## **Facilities**

The PWLC's buildings are completely accessible for people with mobility challenges and include classrooms, an exhibit area, breakout lounges, a kitchen, dining hall and administrative offices. The barn and surrounding lawn area provide additional teaching space for programs as well as an area for more active games.

The 10-room dormitory accommodates up to 65 students, 10 chaperones or teachers, and college environmental education interns. A breakout lounge provides an area for small group sessions.

---

## **Mission Statements**

### **The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

The mission of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.

### **The Fergus Falls Wetland Management District**

The mission of this District is to identify, protect and restore the tallgrass prairie/wetland ecosystem and associated habitats, and to provide opportunities for recreation and environmental education.

### **The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center**

The mission of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center is to provide environmental education opportunities for students, private landowners and the general public, and to foster stewardship by demonstrating the methods for protection, enhancement and restoration of the prairie pothole ecosystem.

This trip planner has been prepared to help plan a successful visit to the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. The safety of students is our primary concern. Of course, having a fun and educational visit is also important. Please be familiar with the PWLC's policies and procedures and call with any questions. We look forward to seeing you at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.

Prairie Wetlands Learning Center  
602 State Highway 210 East  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537  
(218)-736-0938  
(218)-736-0941 (fax)

---

## Facilities

### Lodging

The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center Dormitory contains ten rooms that sleep eight to a room. With space for chaperones and teachers, 65 students can be accommodated at any one time. Prairie Wetlands Learning Center interns are also housed in the Dormitory in a separate section and provide emergency contacts and security. Each room has 4 bunk beds with mattresses, lockable shower and bathroom with two sinks and storage for luggage. Three rooms have accessible showers and bathrooms for those using wheelchairs.

A lounge on the second floor is reserved for adults and Prairie Wetlands Learning Center intern staff only, which is off limits to students. A lounge telephone accepts outgoing emergency, collect and calling card calls only. Students may use this phone only with adult supervision. A washer and dryer are available if members of the group run out of clean clothes and may be accessed by contacting the intern staff.

The Dormitory is locked at all times. Only the lead teacher and designated group chaperones will have keys. **Supervision of students in the Dormitory is the responsibility of the group leader and chaperones. No students should be in the Dormitory without an adult.**

Quiet time is from 10:00 p.m. - 6:30 a.m. for all members of the group. Group leaders are expected to enforce the quiet time as the days are full of activity and a good night's sleep is essential for all. Electric appliances (hairdryers, games, radios) and food or drink (other than water) are not allowed in the Dormitory at any time.

We ask that all overnight visitors practice conservation manners while staying in the Dormitory. This means turning off lights and water, closing windows and blinds and maintaining a clean room. The air conditioning and heating system is centrally controlled, and maintained at a comfortable level for the season.

### Visitor Center

The Visitor Center includes two classrooms, dining hall, kitchen, environmental education material storage, a lounge, exhibit area, the Bluestem Store and administrative offices. The exhibit area, administrative offices and store are open to the public during regular hours. Access to the Visitor Center from the Dormitory is via the link on the lower level of the buildings. When groups are in residence, the lower level of the Visitor Center is closed to the general public.

Many programs will make use of the exhibit area and classrooms. Please leave these areas in a suitable condition for the next group to use. Do not leave or store any materials in the Visitor Center. If storage space is needed, one of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center staff will be happy to provide space in an appropriate area.

---

## Food Service

All meals are served cafeteria style in the Dining Hall. Teachers and chaperones are responsible for mealtime order and discipline. We encourage students to take only what they can eat and eat all they take. Group leaders may want to assign seating for meals prior to arrival. Tables seat six persons each and can be numbered.

Any special dietary needs and requests should be made when completing the *Reservation and Billing Form*. Our food service staff will do its best to accommodate your requests, but keep in mind that very specialized requests may require that groups bring their own supplemental food.

The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center practices conservation manners at meals. This means using real dishes and silverware, and wasting as little food as possible. Everyone is required to bus his or her own dishes to the pick up area. The closest adult, who should request towels from the kitchen, should handle spills. Groups may request box lunches to eat off-site or on the bus ride home.

### Snacks

The PWLC's food service can provide healthy snacks including popcorn, cookies, fruit and other items at an additional charge. Groups bringing their own snacks should use recyclable packaging if possible, and please remember that *absolutely no food is allowed in the Dormitory*.

### Birthday Cakes

Birthday cakes can be provided at an additional cost. Please inquire at the time of booking your visit.

### KP Duty

KP duty is an important part of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center community while groups are in residence. It is not a disciplinary action, but a way for members of the group to assist in the overall success of the visit, and make meal times run smoothly.

Student kitchen helpers are needed at each meal. The number of helpers is based on the size of the group. Group leaders should plan on one KP helper for every 10 people. KP helpers help the food service staff set up the meal, clean up the Dining Hall, and with older groups, assist in kitchen clean up. Designation of a lead KP adult is also requested, along with other adults as needed. Plan on one KP adult for every 20 students in attendance. The lead adult supervises the students and trains the other adults who will later supervise the students.

Please note that all KP students and adults will need to report to the kitchen 10 minutes prior to meals and be busy for approximately 15 minutes following meals. KP helpers are always the first ones to go through the food line.

---

## Emergency Information

### **Prairie Wetlands Learning Center Staff Contact**

A Prairie Wetlands Learning Center staff member will be assigned to each group as the primary contact before and during the groups stay at the PWLC. This person will work with the group to make sure the scheduled programs meet the needs of the group, ensure that dorm rooms are assigned correctly and any other pre-trip needs are met. Upon arrival at the PWLC, the contact person will greet the group, help them settle into the Dormitory and make sure all programs are set.

### **Medical Needs**

Group leaders are responsible for having medical information about all members of the group, including adult chaperones, with them during the visit. Please alert the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center contact person of any allergies or medical needs that your group has.

*The dispensing of any medication to group members by Prairie Wetlands Learning Center staff is prohibited. Group leaders and chaperones are responsible for the storage and dispensing of any medication needed by students during the visit.*

All members of the staff are trained in community first aid and CPR and carry basic first aid kits during programs. In addition, first aid kits are located in several areas of each building. For medical situations that are beyond what can be treated by these first aid kits, a group leader should report the situation to any Prairie Wetlands Learning Center staff member. A hospital is located less than one mile from the PWLC, and 911 response is only minutes away. For medical conditions that do not require emergency transportation, the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center encourages all groups to bring an extra vehicle for transportation. The PWLC is prohibited from transporting members of any program or class in personal or government vehicles.

### **Emergency Contact Information**

The main telephone number for the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center is (218) 736-0938 and is answered from 7 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday. Our voice mail system is available 24 hours a day for non-emergency messages (the number and extension will be provided upon trip confirmation). In an emergency, contact a staff member by dialing our cell phone at 218-770-4633 or toll free 877-908-4633.

Non-emergency messages will be delivered at the next meal. Emergency messages will be delivered immediately.

---

## **Student Mail**

Mail will be delivered to students at the evening meal. Be sure to leave adequate time for mail to arrive while students are at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. Mail to:

Student Name,  
C/O School Name  
Prairie Wetlands Learning Center  
602 State Highway 210 East  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56537



---

## Fees and Fundraising

The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center is a facility of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. All fees charged for the residential environmental education program are retained by the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center to pay for food service, housekeeping, environmental education staff and materials. The fees cover all costs (except additional services) for a group from lunch on the day of arrival to lunch on the day of departure.

### 2002-2003 School Year Fee Schedule

All fees are per individual (lead teachers are exempt from fees).

2 days/1 night	\$40
3 days/2 nights	\$75
4 days/3 nights	\$125
5 days/4 nights	\$150

### Fundraising and Scholarships

The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center Scholarship fund allows clubs, foundations, and individuals to contribute funds to help schools participate in overnight visits. Funds are available to cover up to 25% of the cost for their **first** overnight visit to the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.

To apply, fill out and return the *Scholarship Application Form* found on page 28-29 of this planner, and return it with the Reservation and Billing Form.

### Other Fundraising Ideas

Many community organizations will support educational trips through their charitable gambling operations (e.g. pull-tabs). Groups such as the American Legion, Eagles, VFW and other similar organizations are a good place to start. In addition, civic groups like Kiwanis and Rotary may be willing to make a donation. Finally, local sportsmans clubs may support school groups participating in environmental education programming, too. Traditional fundraising through sales of gifts, food items and other materials is often very successful in offsetting the costs of an overnight trip.

---

## Scheduling a Trip

Scheduling an overnight visit with your class to the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center is easy, but does require advance planning. Group leaders generally plan for a fall trip the prior spring or summer and a spring trip the prior fall. Follow these steps to start the process.

1. Call the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center to determine available dates for the group to visit. It is a good idea to have several possible dates in mind when calling. Fill out the *Reservation and Billing Form* on page 21 of this planner, and return it to the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center as soon as possible.
2. When we receive the form and information about your group, the PWLC office administrator will be your primary contact to help begin planning your visit. Our education staff will help your group leader create a program schedule based on your needs and requests. They will also plan meals, dorm room assignments, evening sessions and other logistical needs that will ensure a fun and educational visit.
3. Confirm buses, chaperones, permission slips, medical forms, date and time of arrival, program, and any special needs at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.
4. The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center will bill the group within one week of departure. The final bill is based on the number of participants confirmed on the *Reservation and Billing Form* less no more than 5 persons or 10% (whichever is greater) if there are fewer participants than originally confirmed. Lead teachers are not charged, however all chaperones are included in the final amount. A minimum billing of 15 persons will be made to all groups.
5. Schedule your date(s) for a visit next year.

## Changes and Cancellations

Cancellations require a minimum of 60 days with no penalty. Groups canceling less than 60 days prior will be asked to pay a percentage of the fee. This is because the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center may not be able to fill the space and will have to incur costs for food service and extra staff. Please plan carefully!

---

## **Arrival and Departure**

Groups should plan to arrive at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center between 10 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Groups arriving later in the day will have shortened afternoon programs because of time considerations involved in check in and orientation. After arriving, all groups will check into their dorm rooms and receive an orientation session with the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center staff. Environmental education programs begin immediately after lunch.

Prior to breakfast on the day of departure, all luggage should be placed in the hallway luggage carts so our staff can clean the rooms for the next group. Most groups will depart after lunch as soon as the Dining Hall is clean. If time is short, a box lunch can be provided to eat on the bus during the trip home. Be sure eating is allowed on the bus.

## **Additional Services and Charges**

Some services, such as photocopying, birthday cakes and linens are available at an additional charge. Also, charges will be made for damage to property, expendable educational materials and lost keys. The PWLC's educational partners, such as A Center for the Arts and the Otter Tail County Historical Society, that provide other educational programs have additional charges as well.

---

## **Environmental Education Program Content**

### **Aliens on the Prairie (1.5 hours)**

Following close-up investigations of various plants, students will be able to:

- Identify exotic plant species based on leaf, flower, and stem appearance
- Consider short term and long term problems associated with exotic species
- Evaluate human actions and their impacts related to exotic species

### **Birds of the Prairie Pothole Region (1.5 hours)**

After a series of indoor activities and an outdoor bird walk, students will be able to:

- Describe several characteristics of birds
- List unique adaptations birds have to help them survive
- Determine the role of birds in the Prairie Pothole Region

### **Bugs, Slugs, and Other Thugs (1.5 hours)**

By visiting three different habitats, students will be able to:

- Collect and identify insects found in the prairie, oak savanna, and wetland
- Evaluate the differences in species diversity within each habitat
- Discuss why all insects are not found in the same habitat

### **Discovery Hike - 1 Mile (1.5 hours)**

Upon completion, the students will be able to:

- Define a food chain and a food web
- Explain predator/prey relationships in the prairie habitat
- Identify habitat requirements for several prairie plant and animal species

### **Discovery Hike - 3 Mile (1.5 or 3 hours)**

Upon completion, the students will be able to:

- Identify ways humans impact(ed) the prairie from past to present
- Define the role of fire in a prairie and describe the differences between prescribed burns and wildfires
- List adaptations of prairie plants and animals

### **Endangered Species (1.5 hours, indoors)**

Classroom and small group activities will enable the students to:

- Distinguish between threatened, rare, and endangered species, with special emphasis on Minnesota plants and animals
- Identify several species in each classification and discuss related current issues
- Describe measures involved with the protection of species, and the role of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

---

### **The Latest Dirt and Decomposers (1.5 hours)**

Following a hands-on outdoor experience, students will be able to:

- Analyze layers of a soil profile
- Compare and contrast the different types of soil found around the PWLC
- Define decomposition and identify different types of decomposers

### **Mapping the Prairie (1.5 or 3 hours)**

Through indoor and outdoor activities, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate the use of field mapping techniques by creating a series of maps
- Describe the benefits of GPS (Global Positioning System) and GIS (Geographical Information System) technologies
- Predict where people, plants, and animals live by interpreting maps

### **Migration Beyond Borders (1.5 hours)**

Following indoor and outdoor activities, students will be able to:

- Define migration and identify different migration patterns
- Predict and identify regional migratory species
- Observe techniques used to track migration
- List species that use the Prairie Pothole Region as a stopover

### **Old Bones on the Prairie (1.5 hours)**

Through hands-on activities, students will be able to:

- Describe the historical importance of the American Bison
- List reasons for the decrease in bison numbers
- Demonstrate basic archaeological procedures

### **Pondering Potholes (1.5 hours)**

Through a close-up look at the aquatic life in a wetland, students will be able to:

- Investigate the variety of life in a pothole
- Define and observe aquatic adaptations
- Use a field guide and key to identify species

### **The Power of Observation (1.5 hours)**

Following indoor activities and a hike, students will be able to:

- List ways to improve observation skills
- Predict, investigate and record field observations around the PWLC
- Describe the importance of having good observation skills

---

**Tracking Predators (3 hours)**

By visiting pre-selected sites, students will be able to:

- Gather information on the predators living at or around the PWLC
- Analyze biological data and develop a presentation
- Discuss the distribution of predators in the local area

**Water, Water, Everywhere (1.5 hours)**

Through a series of activities, students will be able to:

- Define a watershed and determine which watershed they live in
- Discuss groundwater issues, especially as they relate to wetlands
- Estimate how much water their family uses in a 24-hour period

**Wetland Typing (1.5 hours)**

Following a hike to different wetlands around the PWLC, students will be able to:

- Understand the importance of all wetland types
- Recognize features and characteristics that are used to classify wetlands
- Match their classification skills with those of professional biologists

---

## **Prairie Pothole Projects**

Through writing, drawing, and public speaking, students will be able to:

- Create a product
- Use illustrations and visual aids
- Describe ideas and events from personal experience and observation at the PWLC
- Use improvisation to generate and communicate artistic intent

The projects available allow the students to use their imagination and explore their skills. Students will receive an introduction on what is available for their use, some things to think about, some guidelines and rules to remember and will have the chance to see a previous Prairie Project example. Students will be in teams, and all members of the team are expected to participate equally. PWLC staff and volunteers will be around to help students if the need arises.

### **Select from these:**

- |                                  |                                   |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Newspaper/Newsletter          | 4. Town meeting                   |
| 2. Half hour TV/Video production | 5. Art projects/music             |
| 3. Paper bag dramatics and skits | 6. Plays (some available at PWLC) |

## Evening Programs

### **A Center for the Arts (time varies, indoors)**

See description under Programs with PWLC's Partners on page 15.

### **Nature on the Night Shift (1.5 hours)**

After a night hike, the students will be able to:

- List several adaptations of nocturnal animals
- Investigate and discuss nocturnal predator/prey relationships

### **Owl Prowl (1.5 hours)**

Following a hands-on investigation of owl pellets\* and a night hike, students will be able to:

- Explain scientific information gained from investigating an owl pellet
- Name diurnal and nocturnal owls native to Minnesota
- Describe special owl adaptations

*\*Additional program cost of \$1.00 per pellet. One pellet for two students is recommended.*

### **Under the Cover of Darkness (1.5 hours)**

After this evening experience, students will be able to:

- Identify several constellations in the evening sky
- Describe different myths, legends and folklore about the stars and planets
- Use an astronomy field guide and star chart

.....

### **Evening Activities**

Options:

- Dutch Auction
- Eco-jeopardy
- Skits - scripted
- Who Wants to be a Millionaire



---

## Programs with PWLC's Partners

A Center for the Arts and the Otter Tail County Historical Society offer the following programs in cooperation with the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. More information and maps will be provided if a program with our educational partners is desired. Times listed do NOT include travel time, and transportation is not included.

### **A Center for the Arts (time varies, indoors)**

Depending on A Center for the Arts calendar, special programs may be viewed during the day or evening. Program examples include a silent movie, pizza party, music, theater, dance or literary and visual arts events.

### **The Otter Tail County Historical Society**

Options:

#### **1. Tour The Otter Tail County Museum (1 hour, indoors)**

Following a visit to the museum, students will be able to:

- Describe the lifestyles of people who lived in the area prior to 1940: prehistoric people, Native Americans and homesteaders
- Distinguish the differences between a typical Minnesota town in 1916 and today
- Recognize agricultural practices used from 1850-1940 and explain their purposes

#### **2. Museum Lessons (45 minutes each, indoors)**

Combine a tour of the museum with a lesson that includes photographs, artifacts, manipulatives and primary resources. Choose from the following:

- Homesteading on the Prairie
- Touch the Earth: Anishinabe Indian traditional culture
- Growing Up on the Prairie (includes toys, clothing, education before 1940)

#### **3. History Hikes (1 hour)**

Choose a city or river walk and explore the history and architecture of Fergus Falls.

#### **4. Phelps Mill Tour (time varies)**

Located approximately 20 miles from Fergus Falls in Maine, Minnesota, Phelps Mill was built in 1889 and is considered one of the most recognizable historic structures in Minnesota. Students can learn the Mill history by observing intact, historical machinery and by watching an informational video. With advance notice, a knowledgeable volunteer offers special group tours.

---

## Sample Schedules

### Overnight Package #1 - Two Days, One Night (Weekdays)

Includes:

- One overnight accommodation
- Day 1 lunch, dinner and evening snack
- Day 2 breakfast, lunch

Teacher Selects:

- Three daytime programs and one evening program

#### Day 1

11:00 a.m.	Arrive at PWLC
11:15 a.m.	Room Assignments/Check-in/Orientation
12:00 noon	Lunch - either brown bag from home or PWLC provides
1:00 p.m.	PWLC Activity Session (1)
2:30 p.m.	Rest Rooms and Snack (optional)
3:00 p.m.	PWLC Activity Session (2)
4:30 p.m.	School Conducted Activities and/or Free Time
6:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 p.m.	PWLC Evening Activity
8:30 p.m.	Free Time and/or School Conducted Activities
10:00 p.m.	Lights Out

#### Day 2

7:00 a.m.	Packing and check out
8:00 a.m.	Breakfast
9:00 a.m.	PWLC Activity Session (3)
11:00 a.m.	Wrap up and Awards
12:00 noon	Lunch
1:00 p.m.	Load buses and depart for home

## **School Overnight Package #2 - Three Days, Two Nights (Weekdays)**

Includes:

- Two overnight accommodations
- Day 1 lunch, dinner and evening snack
- Day 2 breakfast, lunch, dinner and evening snack
- Day 3 breakfast and lunch

Teacher Selects:

- Four daytime sessions and two evening sessions
- One Prairie Pothole Project

### **Day 1**

11:00 a.m. Arrive at PWLC  
11:15 a.m. Room Assignments/Check-in/Orientation  
12:00 noon Lunch - either brown bag from home or PWLC provides  
1:00 p.m. PWLC Activity Session (1)  
2:30 p.m. Rest Rooms and Snack (optional)  
3:00 p.m. PWLC Activity Session (2)  
4:30 p.m. School Conducted Activities and/or Free Time  
6:00 p.m. Dinner  
7:00 p.m. PWLC Evening Activity  
8:30 p.m. Free Time and/or School Conducted Activities  
10:00 p.m. Lights Out

### **Day 2**

7:30 a.m. Breakfast  
8:30 a.m. PWLC Activity Session (3)  
10:00 a.m. Rest Rooms  
10:30 a.m. PWLC Activity Session (4)  
12:00 noon Lunch  
1:00 p.m. Resource Overview of Group Project Possibilities  
1:30 p.m. Group Project Instruction by PWLC Staff  
2:00 p.m. Rest Rooms and Snack (optional)  
2:30 p.m. Independent Break out Sessions  
5:00 p.m. Free Time/Bluestem Store  
6:00 p.m. Dinner  
7:00 p.m. PWLC Evening Activity  
8:30 p.m. Work Time or Free Time (videos, puzzles, games)  
10:00 p.m. Lights Out

### **Day 3**

7:00 a.m. Packing and check out  
8:00 a.m. Breakfast  
9:00 a.m. Presentation of Group Projects  
10:00 a.m. Rest Rooms  
10:30 a.m. PWLC Concluding Activity  
11:30 pm Awards and lunch  
1:00 p.m. Load buses and depart for home

---

## Group Management

When your group arrives at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, a staff member will greet the group and assist in the unloading and check in process. A meeting with the lead teacher(s) and chaperones will be held while students unpack to discuss the schedule, PWLC rules and responsibilities during their stay. After students locate their rooms and get settled in, everyone will meet in the Dining Hall for a welcome and orientation to the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center. If your group is delayed, please call us as soon as possible so that we can alter your schedule.

The safety of students and all other visitors to the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center is our highest priority. **All students must be supervised by an adult at all times.** This includes meal times, free time, travel time between programs, during programs, and especially in the Dormitory. The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center is open to the public, as it is a part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Dormitory is locked at all times; and only the lead teacher, Prairie Wetlands Learning Center staff and other adults the lead teacher designates will have keys.

**Please emphasize to your group that only school/group chaperones, and uniformed Prairie Wetlands Learning Center staff and volunteers should be with their group.**

Remind students that they are ambassadors for their school, town and the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center - this means treating fellow students, teachers, group leaders and staff with respect, and also respecting the equipment, facility, wildlife and grounds. Group discipline is the lead teacher's or group leader's responsibility. While we rarely have discipline problems, persistent disrespect, unsafe actions, disruption or other inappropriate behavior that prevents the group from enjoying their visit will result in a student being removed from the program or the facility.

At least one chaperone must accompany each program group during your stay. Chaperones are encouraged to be active members of the groups, however programs are for the students to answer questions and participate in the activities. A Guide for Teachers and Chaperones outlining rules and responsibilities will be distributed during the orientation session.

# Planning Checklist

## **12 months to 3 months prior to visiting the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center:**

- ☐ Call the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center at 218-736-0938 to inquire about dates and request a Trip Planner.
- ☐ Begin securing funding for the trip (scholarships available- see page 28-29).
- ☐ Review the Trip Planner for important information and instructions.
- ☐ Make reservations for visiting the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.
- ☐ Arrange transportation, and at least one car for emergencies.
- ☐ Choose programs and presentations for the trip.
- ☐ Distribute medical forms, permission slips and trip information to parents.
- ☐ Arrange for chaperones - hold a meeting.
- ☐ Check with school administration for any other paperwork or approvals for the trip.
- ☐ Coordinate Prairie Wetlands Learning Center programs with school curriculum.

## **Two months prior to visit:**

- ☐ Complete and return the *Reservation and Billing Form* to the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center.
- ☐ Complete and return the *Chaperone Listing*.
- ☐ Complete and return the *Roommate Worksheet*.
- ☐ Coordinate with other teachers about work to be missed or made up.

## **Two to four weeks prior to visit:**

- ☐ Review and finalize the program schedule and contact the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center with any changes.
- ☐ Verify the time of arrival and departure.
- ☐ Review and prepare for any teacher led activities.
- ☐ Confirm all chaperones and review chaperone responsibilities and schedules.
- ☐ Confirm transportation.
- ☐ Distribute any additional information to parents (what to bring sheets, emergency contact information, etc.).
- ☐ Assign chaperones to specific programs, dorm time, KP duty (review handout).
- ☐ Assign students to KP time.

## **Two weeks prior to visit:**

- ☐ Collect all student and adult medical forms and permission slips.
- ☐ Collect and organize all teacher led activity materials.
- ☐ Distribute and review what to bring and not to bring sheets with students. Remind that no food is allowed in the Dormitory rooms. Review appropriate clothing for the weather.
- ☐ Confirm number of students and adults, program selection information and any special needs with the PWLC.

## What to Bring Checklist (And What Not to Bring)

Students and adults are responsible for bringing all personal items and clothing, including bedding and towels. Make sure that your group brings clothing that is seasonally appropriate, including fowl weather gear. Please have students label luggage and other personal items with their name and school as the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items. We will mail items back to your school at your expense.

Try to limit luggage to a bedroll and a duffle bag, backpack or small suitcase. Each dorm room has cubbies to store personal belongings, but large suitcases can block exits.

<b>All seasons</b> Backpack or small duffle bag Sleeping bag or bedroll Pillow and pillowcase Underwear Socks (4 pairs) Tennis shoes (2 pair) Pants (2 pair) Short sleeved shirts (2) Long sleeved shirts (2)  Baseball hat Towels and toiletry items Pajamas  Plastic cup	<b>Summer, Spring and Fall</b> Rubber boots Rain gear Jacket  Insect repellent Sunscreen  Short pants  <b>Winter</b> Long johns Sweater Warm parka or coat Snowsuit or ski pants  Warm shirts Mittens AND gloves Warm socks (2 pairs) Warm snow boots Scarf and warm hat	<b>Extras</b> Camera and film Binoculars Book to read  Sunglasses Money for Bluestem Store  <b>Leave at Home</b> Radios, CD players, Electronic games Gum, candy, and other food items Hair dryers, curling irons Nail Polish Knives and other weapons Tobacco, alcohol, drugs
---	--	---

# Reservation and Billing Form

## Group Information

Arrival Date & Time:			
Departure Date & Time:			
Name of Organization:			
Contact Person:			
Mailing Address:			
Daytime Phone:		Evening Phone:	
Fax #:		E-mail Address:	

## Group Statistics

Number of Students:		Document any special needs: i.e. dietary, mobility, visual in space below. Use extra paper if needed.
Number of Adults: *		
Total Participants:		
Grade of Students:		
* Include Teachers and Chaperones <b>Minimum adult : student ratio = 1:10</b>		

## Fees & Charges:

Total # of Participants (excluding teacher) _____ x \$ per participant	\$
Less any PWLC Scholarship Funds	- \$
Additional Fees: Additional Meals Birthday Cakes Lost Key(s) @ \$5 per key Photocopying @ \$0.10 per side Extra Program Fees	\$
<b>Total Fees:</b> Make checks payable to LCSC/PWLC (Lakes Country Service Coop/Prairie Wetlands Learning Center)	\$

Keep a copy for your records

## Program & Schedule Form

### Program Choices

The PWLC can provide three different programs simultaneously. Depending on the total size of the group, please have up to three small groups identified prior to arrival. New programs may be available, therefore, please ask when you call. Environmental Education Program descriptions are located on pages 10-12. In the area below, check the programs of interest.

### Daytime Choices

	Aliens on the Prairie		Migration Beyond Borders
	Birds of the Prairie Pothole Region		Old Bones on the Prairie
	Bugs, Slugs, and Other Thugs		The Otter Tail County Historical Society circle option: 1 2 3 4
	Discovery Hike - 1 mile		Pondering Potholes
	Discovery Hike - 3 mile		The Power of Observation
	Endangered Species		Tracking Predators
	The Latest Dirt and Decomposers		Water, Water, Everywhere
	Mapping the Prairie		Wetland Typing

### Day and Evening Combination

	Prairie Pothole Projects	circle option: 1 2 3 4 5 6
--	--------------------------	----------------------------

### Evening Choices

	Animals in the Dark of Night		Owl Prowl
	A Center for the Performing Arts		Under the Cover of Darkness

### To Be Completed By PWLC Staff

Date reservation taken/by:
Room assignments received:
Staff/Volunteers assigned:



Dear Student:

We are excited about you visiting the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center and hope that you are too! While you are here, you may explore the life in ponds and marshes, track animals, do research and help restore prairies. Be ready to get a little dirty and to be amazed by some of the unique plants and animals that live in the prairie habitat.

You will be making friends with our team of educators and biologists who will lead many of the activities on our 325 acres. We hope that you will have a lot of fun while learning about the prairie and wetland habitats and why they are important.

At the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center, you will share a dorm room with seven other students and chaperones and work in teams to discover some of the mysteries on the prairie. One of your responsibilities will be to get along with your roommates and classmates during your stay.

The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center also has some expectations that you need to know. You should always follow the rules of your school, and the rules of the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center (you will hear about these when you arrive). You will also be assigned some duties for your group while you are here, such as setting the tables for meals or helping to clean up afterwards.

Finally, you should plan to have a lot of fun while you are here. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Your Friends at The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

Dear Parent:

Your child will be participating in an overnight environmental education program at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center (PWLC). This could be the most exciting field trip your child takes this year or ever. The PWLC's professional staff of educators, college interns and dedicated volunteers will help ensure an educational and fun experience for your child.

The 325-acre Prairie Wetlands Learning Center is filled with opportunities for discovery and learning. With over 4 miles of trails, 28 wetlands, an oak savanna and acres of native and restored prairie, students will discover the magic and mysteries of the natural world. The PWLC facility also includes two classrooms, an outdoor amphitheater, and barn. Most activities are held outdoors regardless of the weather, but activities can be moved indoors if weather turns severe.

The health and safety of program participants is the PWLC's highest priority. All PWLC staff are trained in basic first aid and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), and carry first aid kits and two-way radios while outdoors. All children stay in a modern dormitory with either seven or eight children in each room. In the event of an emergency, your child's teacher may make the decision to transport a student to Lake Region Hospital, located one mile from the PWLC. Parents will be contacted immediately.

Meals are served cafeteria style in the Dining Hall, with students assigned to either set up or clean up for each meal. Meals are kid friendly and nutritionally balanced, so no one ever goes hungry! Snacks are also provided upon request from your child's school. Special diets can be accommodated, just make sure your child's teacher has informed the PWLC.

Students phoning home can initiate homesickness. As a rule, students are not allowed to use PWLC telephones except in cases of emergency. Please refrain from calling your child. For emergencies, call the Learning Center at **(218) 736-0938** between the hours of 7:00 am - 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. All other times, call the PWLC's **cell phone at 218-770-4633** or toll free at **877-908-4633**.

If you write to your child, send mail at least 3-4 days prior to their arrival and address it to:

Prairie Wetlands Learning Center  
ATTN: Student Name/School  
602 State Highway 210 East  
Fergus Falls, MN 56537-4217

Please complete and return your school's permission and medical forms to your child's teacher prior to departure for the PWLC. Any student without completed and signed forms will not be allowed to attend the trip. Any medications are the responsibility of your child and the school. **The Prairie Wetlands Learning Center staff is prohibited from dispensing any medication and from storing or carrying medications for your child.**

The wind blows almost all the time on the prairie, even in the warm months. In the spring and fall, the weather can rapidly change from sunny and warm to overcast and cool. Help your child to pack using the following list:

<b>All seasons</b> Backpack or small duffle bag Sleeping bag or bedroll Pillow and pillowcase Underwear Socks (4 pairs) Tennis shoes (2 pair) Pants (2 pair) Short sleeved shirts (2) Long sleeved shirts (2)  Baseball hat Towels and toiletry items Pajamas  Plastic cup	<b>Summer, Spring and Fall</b> Rubber boots Rain gear Jacket  Insect repellent Sunscreen  Short pants  <b>Winter</b> Long johns Sweater Warm parka or coat Snowsuit or ski pants Warm shirts Mittens AND gloves Warm socks (2 pairs) Warm snow boots Scarf and warm hat	<b>Extras</b> Camera and film Binoculars Book to read  Sunglasses Money for Store  <b>Leave at Home</b> Radios, CD players, Electronic games Gum, candy, and other food items Hair dryers, curling irons and nail polish Knives and other weapons Tobacco, alcohol, drugs
---	--	--

If you have any questions or concerns about the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center facilities, personnel or programs, please do not hesitate to call us at (218) 736-0938 or e-mail us at [pwlc@fws.gov](mailto:pwlc@fws.gov).

Sincerely,

Kenneth A. Garrahan, Director  
Prairie Wetlands Learning Center

## Room Assignment Worksheet

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Overnight: \_\_\_\_\_

Please designate adults with an asterisk next to their name.

<p>Room #209 (Wheelchair accessible) Roommates:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>Key: _____</p> <p>Returned: _____</p>	<p>Room #211 Roommates:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>Key: _____</p> <p>Returned: _____</p>
<p>Room #212 Roommates:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>Key: _____</p> <p>Returned: _____</p>	<p>Room #213 Roommates:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>Key: _____</p> <p>Returned: _____</p>

Please designate adults with an asterisk next to their name.

**\*Lower Level\***

<p>Room #109 (Wheelchair accessible)</p> <p>Roommates:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>Key: _____</p> <p>Returned: _____</p>	<p>Room #111</p> <p>Roommates:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>Key: _____</p> <p>Returned: _____</p>
<p>Room #112</p> <p>Roommates:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>Key: _____</p> <p>Returned: _____</p>	<p>Room #113</p> <p>Roommates:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>Key: _____</p> <p>Returned: _____</p>
<p>Room #114 (Wheelchair accessible)</p> <p>Roommates:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>Key: _____</p> <p>Returned: _____</p>	<p>Room #115</p> <p>Roommates:</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>3. _____</p> <p>4. _____</p> <p>5. _____</p> <p>6. _____</p> <p>7. _____</p> <p>8. _____</p> <p>Key: _____</p> <p>Returned: _____</p>

## Scholarship Application

Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_ School Year \_\_\_\_\_ School District \_\_\_\_\_

School Name \_\_\_\_\_

School Address \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Has your school visited the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center (PWLC) before? \_\_\_\_\_

When? \_\_\_\_\_ Day Use or Overnight? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you visited other environmental education facilities? \_\_\_\_\_

Which ones? \_\_\_\_\_

When? \_\_\_\_\_ Day Use or Overnight? \_\_\_\_\_

How many students do you anticipate bringing? \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_

What time of year would you like to visit? \_\_\_\_\_

How many nights would you prefer to stay? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the minimum amount of funding assistance you would need to bring your students to the PWLC for an overnight experience? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you anticipate having to do supplemental fundraising or having to charge students to visit the PWLC? \_\_\_\_\_ About how much? \_\_\_\_\_

-- Over Please --

Please make any comments that would help us decide how to allocate available funds to your program.

Please return this form to: Prairie Wetlands Learning Center  
School Scholarship Program  
602 State Highway 210 East  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota 56537-4217

.....

**Prairie Wetlands Learning Center Use Only**

Date Received \_\_\_\_\_

Date Reviewed \_\_\_\_\_

Funded \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Funded \_\_\_\_\_

Date Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

Date Booked \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

---

## **Prairie Wetlands Learning Center Photo Release Form**

I give permission for any photos or videos taken of my child or any artwork made by my child during educational programs at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center to be used for public relations by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Relation to Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's School: \_\_\_\_\_

-----

## **Prairie Wetlands Learning Center Photo Release Form**

I give permission for any photos or videos taken of my child or any artwork made by my child during educational programs at the Prairie Wetlands Learning Center to be used for public relations by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Relation to Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's School: \_\_\_\_\_